

# REACTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE IN 2022

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**Abstract.** Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 demolished the previous order in Europe. From the beginning of the war, the European Union condemned the Kremlin's actions and expressed support for defending Ukraine. Various measures like humanitarian, economic and political aid were also taken from the beginning. Restrictions (sanctions) have also been imposed on Russia and Belarus that supports it. However, the EU policy also brings costs to the people of the member states. Despite these costs, support for the EU's pro-Ukrainian policy is high. However, it varies from country to country. Ukraine's further struggle depends, among other things, on help from the West (including the EU) and in democratic countries this also depends on public support. This article presents the actions of the EU towards Russia in connection with the aggression against Ukraine and the scale of public support for this policy.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Russia, European Union, crisis, war, European sanctions

## 1. Introduction

If we assume—as the former Polish foreign minister R. Sikorski wrote in his book—that Russia is a sick man of Europe with a gun<sup>1</sup>, then this gun has started firing for good. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this already happened in Georgia, Syria and Donbas in 2014<sup>2</sup>. Russia uses military force as well to achieve its political goals. Due to the undemocratic nature of the Russian political system, the government does not incur (so far it has not) any significant internal political costs. Russia's determination to achieve its own goals has also strengthened its influence towards third countries. Although many countries

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<sup>1</sup> Sikorski, R. 2018. Polska może być lepsza. Kraków: **Znak Horyzont**, pp. 91–92.

<sup>2</sup> See Sazonov, V.; Mölder, H. 2016. Why did Russia attack Ukraine? – Sazonov, V.; Mölder, H.; Müür, K.; Saumets, A. Russian information operations against Ukrainian armed forces and Ukrainian countermeasures (2014–2015). EMA Occasional Papers, Vol. 6, pp. 28–33. [Sazonov, Mölder 2016]

looked away when doing business so as not to see this “Russian gun” and those warning that this was not a dummy but a real threat were considered Russophobes<sup>3</sup>, one may wonder today whether the indecisive reaction to previous cases of the use of military force by the Russian Federation was not one of the reasons that facilitated the decision to launch a military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022. However, this time the reaction of the West was different. The decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine taken by Vladimir Putin has shattered all previous theoretical investigations based on the search for the rationality of political decisions<sup>4</sup>. It also made it necessary for the Western world to develop an appropriate response.

The aim of this article is to present the reaction of the EU to the Russian aggression against Ukraine in the initial period of the conflict and the assessment of these actions by European public opinion. The interaction between the three levels of policy—citizens, member states and European institutions—must be taken into account. Therefore, the subject of the article will be both the decisions of the EU institutions (sanctions) resulting from the arrangements between the member states and social support for such a policy. Considering that the analysed EU activities fall within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, it should be taken into account that they require the consent of all entities of the decision-making process. The positions of the member states may be determined internally, therefore it is justified to analyse the degree of public support for the policy pursued.

In the article the following research questions were posed: What was the EU’s reaction to Russian aggression against Ukraine? What was the European public’s assessment of EU policy towards Russian aggression in Ukraine? During the research, the author analysed the actions of the EU in the first months of the war and their legal basis in this regard. European public opinion polls were also analysed. The analysis contained in the article was conducted during the duration of the examined phenomenon, hence it cannot be a final

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<sup>3</sup> See **Marcinkowski, T.** 2020. Federacja Rosyjska w polityce zagranicznej rządu Zjednoczonej Prawicy w latach 2015–2019. Rosja a bezpieczeństwo Polski w nowym (nie)ładzie międzynarodowym. – Tymanowski, J.; Skwarski, A.; Moch, N. Rosja w procesie wyzwań – między demokracją a autorytaryzmem. Warsaw: Elipsa, pp.77–92.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps in order to understand the current Russian policy it would be necessary not only to study political science, but also to use the analysis of biological and psychological determinants of political decisions. See **Ciechański, J.** 2016. Czynniki biologiczne w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Warsaw: Scholar; **Girard, R.** 2019. Apokalipsa tu i teraz. Cracow: WAM; **Gray, J.** 2006. Al-Kaida i korzenie nowoczesności. Warsaw: Aletheia.

diagnosis of the situation. The study used quantitative methods (analysis of existing data) and qualitative methods (analysis of EU documents, communiqués of EU institutions and bodies, and analysis of the decision-making process).

## 2. Reaction of the European Union – politics and sanctions<sup>5</sup>

Since 2014 one has been able to observe increasing Russian pressure on the Ukrainian authorities, and also on Western countries indirectly. The authorities of the Russian Federation did not accept Ukraine's independent foreign policy, especially its rapprochement with Western structures<sup>6</sup>. The withdrawal of the then President of Ukraine V. Yanukovich from signing the association agreement with the European Union became the direct reason for the Euro-aidan events in 2013. As a result, this led to hybrid activities<sup>7</sup> supported by Russia, as a result of which Ukraine lost Crimea and part of Donbas and entered into a state of permanent armed conflict in the east of the country. Unfortunately, the response of Western countries was too weak to have any real impact on the situation<sup>8</sup>. The sanctions introduced by Western countries were of a rather symbolic character and had little impact on Putin's policy. However, the new Ukrainian authorities did not give up their policy. Therefore, in December 2021 the Russian authorities demanded security guarantees from the United States and other NATO countries by fulfilling the presented conditions for a new order in the region<sup>9</sup>. Among them there was the demand to restore the state that existed before 1997, meaning the withdrawal of NATO troops and military installations from the countries that joined NATO after 1997. The presented demands were unacceptable to the United States and other allies. In the region of Central and Eastern Europe, they were considered provocative. However, regardless of whether it was a negotiation

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<sup>5</sup> The subject of this article is not economic and humanitarian aid from the EU for Ukraine, which is also an important area of support for this country.

<sup>6</sup> See **Sazonov, Mölder** 2016.

<sup>7</sup> See **Banasik, M.** 2018. *Wojna hybrydowa i jej konsekwencje dla bezpieczeństwa euroatlantyckiego*. Warszawa: Difin.

<sup>8</sup> See **Pospieszna, P.** 2018. *Sankcje Unii Europejskiej wobec Rosji: proces decyzyjny, trwałość i rola państw członkowskich*. – *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, No. 12, s. 311–321.

<sup>9</sup> On the topic of Russian vision of a new international order see **Lukin, A.** 2022. *Russia and the Changes of World Order*. – Šraders, S.; Terry, G. S. (ed.). *A restless embrace of the past? The Conference on Russia Papers 2022*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp.45–50.

proposal or, as A. Rogozińska notes,<sup>10</sup> a propaganda activity, it did not lead to an agreement with the West. In February 2022 Russia began pursuing its goals through military actions directly aimed at Ukraine.

Presenting the State of the Union in 2022, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen drew attention to the need for solidarity and determination in connection with the ensuing crisis: solidarity with Ukraine, but also solidarity within the Union. At the same time, she noted that determination in supporting Ukraine is also a defence of European values, the European economy and the future of the integration project. In her opinion, this is a war between autocracy and democracy. She announced that the sanctions imposed on Russia and Belarus will be maintained and that aid for heroic Ukraine will be constituted. At the same time, in the same speech she devoted a lot of time to pointing out the consequences of the war in the East in the form of challenges and problems related to the increase in the cost of living in Europe<sup>11</sup>.

Even before the Russian aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, new sanctions were introduced against the Russian Federation. The reason was the recognition by Russia of areas not controlled by the government of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as independent, and the sending of troops into this region. The introduction of the sanctions was announced on 23 February 2022. An extension was announced of the restrictive measures to all 351 members of the Russian State Duma who, on 15 February 2022, voted for the appeal to President V. Putin to recognise the independence of the self-proclaimed so-called “republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk. In addition, targeted restrictive measures were imposed on 27 high-profile individuals and important entities that were involved in undermining or threatening Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. These include decision-makers such as members of the government involved in these decisions, banks and entrepreneurs or oligarchs who financially or materially support or benefit from Russian operations in the region, high-ranking military personnel involved in the invasion and destabilization activities, as well as

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<sup>10</sup> “/.../ the fact that the content of the demands have been made public is an indication that Moscow did not actually expect them to be accepted. The unreality of the demands made was calculated rather to produce a propaganda effect on a local and global scale.” See **Rogozińska, A.** 2022. Identyfikacja uwarunkowań konfliktu rosyjsko-ukraińskiego w międzynarodowym środowisku bezpieczeństwa. – *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, No. 1/2022, s. 125.

<sup>11</sup> 2022 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. Speech. Strassbourg, 14 September 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/speech\\_22\\_5493](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/speech_22_5493) (accessed 24.01.2023).

those responsible for the disinformation war against Ukraine. The restrictive measures in place are an asset freeze and a ban on making funds available to sanctioned persons and entities as well as a ban on travel to and through the EU<sup>12</sup>.

As noted by I. Wiśniewska, Russian declarations of recognition of the so-called republics in eastern Ukraine were perceived by Western states as Russia's final rejection of a diplomatic solution to the dispute. The late-night talks between US President J. Biden, French President E. Macron and German Chancellor O. Scholz were supposed to decide on taking more decisive action instead of producing further talks. It was, among others, as a result of these arrangements that Germany withheld the certification of Nord Stream 2, and France and the US cancelled previously scheduled meetings at the level of foreign ministers. As noted by an analyst from the Centre for Eastern Studies,

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<sup>12</sup> The EU adopts a package of sanctions in response to Russian recognition of the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the sending of troops into the region. Council of the EU Press Release, 23 February 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/23/russian-recognition-of-the-non-government-controlled-areas-of-the-donetsk-and-luhansk-oblasts-of-ukraine-as-independent-entities-eu-adopts-package-of-sanctions/> (accessed 21.07.2022). See also: Council Regulation (EU) 2022/259 of 23 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/260 of 23 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/261 of 23 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Regulation (EU) 2022/262 of 23 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine; Council Regulation (EU) 2022/263 of 23 February 2022 concerning restrictive measures in response to the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the ordering of Russian armed forces into those areas; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/264 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/265 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/266 of 23 February 2022 concerning restrictive measures in response to the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the ordering of Russian armed forces into those areas; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/267 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L42 I, Vol. 65, 23 February 2022. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A042I%3AFULL> (accessed 25.07.2022).

“for the first time, the Western side did not respond to the escalation by intensifying diplomatic efforts, but made further talks conditional on Russia taking real steps of military de-escalation<sup>13</sup>”.

The unprecedented Russian military aggression on 24 February was unequivocally condemned by the European Union as well as its Member States and many other countries around the world. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, strongly expressed this on behalf of the EU, pointing to Putin’s responsibility for the return of war to Europe and declaring EU support for Ukraine and further actions in the form of sanctions against the aggressor<sup>14</sup>. The European Council presented its position in a similar way, defining the Russian aggression as unjustified, illegal and violating order in Europe. The Council Conclusions also indicated the involvement of Belarus in this aggression and announced that the sanctions would also cover this country<sup>15</sup>.

The Council announced the introduction of further sanctions against the Russian Federation. Individual sanctions were imposed on President of the Russian Federation V. Putin and Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov, as well as members of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and other members of the Russian State Duma who ratified the government’s decision on the Treaty on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between the Russian Federation and two recognized entities in Donbas. In addition, it was announced that the EU would also sanction those individuals who facilitated Russian military aggression from Belarus. Moreover, a suspension of visa facilitations for Russian diplomats, other Russian officials and entrepreneurs was declared<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> **Wiśniewska, I.** 2022. Zachodnie sankcje i ich konsekwencje. – Analizy Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 24.02.2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-02-24/zachodnie-sankcje-i-ich-konsekwencje> (accessed 01.08.2022).

<sup>14</sup> Press statement by President von der Leyen on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. – European Commission. Statement, Brussels, 24 February 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_22\\_1322](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_1322) (accessed 25.07.2022).

<sup>15</sup> European Council conclusions on Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. – European Council. Conclusions, 24 February 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2022/02/24/european-council-conclusions-24-february-2022/> (accessed 25.07.2022).

<sup>16</sup> Detailed provisions on sanctions are contained in the following legal acts: Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/329 of 25 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L 50, Vol. 65, 25 February 2022; Council Regulation (EU) 2022/330 of 25 February 2022 amending

The Council also adopted a package of financial sanctions. They included an extension of existing financial restrictions, cutting off Russia's access to key capital markets. At the same time, a ban was announced on listing and providing services for shares of Russian state-owned entities in EU trading systems, a ban on accepting deposits of Russian citizens or residents in excess of certain values by EU central securities depositories, and a ban on keeping accounts of Russian clients selling securities denominated in euros. Additional measures were also adumbrated to make it more difficult for Russian oligarchs and officials to hide their assets in the EU.

The sanctions also affected technology as well as the energy and transport sectors. A ban on the supply, transfer and export to Russia of the indicated goods and technologies for oil refining and services related to this area of operation, a ban on the export of goods and technologies for the needs of the aviation and space industry, and a ban on the provision of related services (including insurance services, reinsurance and maintenance) were announced. In the face of Russia's military actions, the EU also adopted sanctions regarding further restrictions on the export of dual-use goods and technologies, as well as restrictions on the export of certain goods and technologies that could be used in the defence industry and might serve to continue the war<sup>17</sup>. These restrictions were particularly severe in the aviation sector, as 55% of aircraft

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regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L 51, Vol. 65, 25 February 2022; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/331 of 25 February 2022 amending 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L 52, Vol. 65, 25 February 2022; Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/332 of 25 February 2022 implementing regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L 53, Vol. 65, 25 February 2022; Council decision (EU) 2022/333 of 25 February 2022 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation. – Official Journal of the European Union L 54, Vol. 65, 25 February 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Russia's military aggression against Ukraine: EU imposes sanctions against President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov and adopts wide-ranging individual and economic sanctions. – Council of the EU. Press release, 25 February 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2022/02/25/russia-s-military-aggression-against-ukraine-eu-imposes-sanctions-against-president-putin-and-foreign-minister-lavrov-and-adopts-wide-ranging-individual-and-economic-sanctions/> (accessed 01.08.2022).

in Russia are leased from international concerns<sup>18</sup>. The cut-off from maintenance services and the ban on flights for Russian carriers introduced by EU Member States (27 February 2022) have become a significant problem for the Russian civil aviation sector. Restrictions on technology for the oil industry may have negative consequences in the long term. This will make servicing more difficult and will prevent the modernisation of the technological solutions used, extend the time of implementation of commenced investments or make them impossible, and increase their costs. It should be noted, however, that Russia, looking for alternative solutions distinct from Western technologies, will be forced to use the Chinese offer (or other bidders). This may lead to a strengthening of the Chinese presence in this area of the Russian economy, and perhaps also to a permanent replacement of the technological solutions used with Chinese ones. It remains debatable whether People's Republic of China will decide to act openly against the sanctions and the position of the West in this regard<sup>19</sup>.

On 26 February 2022 the European Union, together with the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, decided to exclude some major Russian banks from the SWIFT system<sup>20</sup>, implementing a ban on transactions with the Russian central bank, a freezing of all its assets<sup>21</sup> (entered into force on 28 February 2022), and further measures to deprive Russian oligarchs of the use of assets held in the West. According to many analysts, the disconnection of only some Russian banks from the SWIFT system at this time was related

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<sup>18</sup> See **Wiśniewska, I.** 2022. Kolejne zachodnie sankcje przeciwko Rosji. – *Analizy Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich*, 26.02.2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-02-26/kolejne-zachodnie-sankcje-przeciwko-rosji> (accessed 26.08.2022).

<sup>19</sup> See **Budzisz, M.; Góralczyk, B.; Radziejewski, B.** 2022. *Wielka gra o Ukrainę*. Warsaw: Nowa Konfederacja.

<sup>20</sup> The exclusion concerned the following Russian banks: Bank Otkritie, Novikombank, Promsvyazbank, Bank Rossiya, Sovcombank, Vneshecombank (VEB), VTB Bank, and entered into force on March 2 2022. See Council Regulation (EU) 2022/345 of 1 March 2022 r. amending regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine and Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/346 of 1 March 2022 amending decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. – *Official Journal of the European Union* L63, Vol. 65, 2 March 2022.

<sup>21</sup> As the Centre for Eastern Studies analyst notes: "Currently, Russia's Central Bank reserves far exceed the entire foreign debt of the country (\$490 billion), and would also be enough for almost three years of imports. However, if assets in dollars, euros, pounds, yen and francs are blocked, and gold turns out to be of little use because it will not be possible to obtain currency for it, then they may decrease by more than 60%". **Wiśniewska, I.** 2022. *Cios Zachodu w gospodarkę Rosji*. – *Analizy Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich*, 28.02.2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-02-28/cios-zachodu-w-gospodarke-rosji> (accessed 26.08.2022)



to the desire to maintain the stability of transactions on the power raw materials market. Due to increased disinformation activity from the Russian side, Russia Today and Sputnik and their subsidiaries were blocked in the EU on 2 March<sup>22</sup>. It is worth noting that Russian disinformation activities aimed at the European Union have been identified for years as an important element disintegrating the Community<sup>23</sup>. From the point of view of the EU, the decision to transfer lethal weapons worth EUR 450 million to Ukraine should be considered very important. The announcement of this step by J. Borrell was considered a new quality in European politics<sup>24</sup>.

On 4 March the Commission suspended cooperation with entities from the Russian Federation in relation to research and innovation, including that under the “Horizon Europe” program<sup>25</sup>. Many European universities and other research and development entities, universities and scientific organizations have also taken similar actions in relation to bilateral cooperation, taking an unequivocally critical stance towards Russian actions. The Commission has also suspended cooperation with Russia and Belarus under cross-border cooperation programs under the European Neighborhood Instrument and under the Interreg program “Baltic Sea Region”<sup>26</sup>.

In early March, as part of the sanctions package, the EU banned investment in future projects co-financed by the Russian Direct Investment Fund (including participation in or co-financing these projects) and introduced a ban on the sale, delivery, transfer or export of euro-denominated banknotes to Russia or to any natural or legal person, entity or body in Russia. This ban is also to apply to the government of the Russian Federation and the Central

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<sup>22</sup> This applies to all means of transmission and distribution (including cable, satellite and IPTV, platforms, websites and applications). All applicable licenses, approvals and distribution agreements with respect to these entities and their subsidiaries are suspended.

<sup>23</sup> Compare **Sikorski, J.** 2020. *Polska w obliczu rosyjskiej ekspansji informacyjnej*. Tymanowski, J.; Skwarski, A.; Moch, N. *Rosja w procesie wyzwań – między demokracją a autorytaryzmem*. Warsaw: Elipsa, pp. 153–171.

<sup>24</sup> **Bornio, J.** 2022. *Rosyjska inwazja przeobrażają architekturę bezpieczeństwa Europy środkowo-wschodniej*. – *Komentarze IEŚ*, No. 548 (60/2022), 07.03.2022. <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/rosyjska-inwazja-przeobraza-architekture-bezpieczenstwa-europy-srodkowo-wschodniej/> (accessed 21.11.2022).

<sup>25</sup> Commission suspends cooperation with Russia on research and innovation. – European Commission. Press release, Brussels, 4 March 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/ip\\_22\\_1544](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/ip_22_1544) (accessed 02.08.2022).

<sup>26</sup> Commission suspends cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation with Russia and Belarus. – European Commission. Press release, Brussels, 4 March 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/ip\\_22\\_1526](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/ip_22_1526) (accessed 02.08.2022).

Bank of Russia<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, the scope of personal sanctions was also extended. The sanctions lists include Russian oligarchs, e.g. A. Usmanov, M. Fridman, P. Aven, I. Sechin, N. Tokarev, G. Timchenko, A. Ponomarenko, as well as Putin's spokesman D. Peskov and representatives of the media O. I Skabeeva and A. Krasowski. As noted by I. Wiśniewska, the sanctions introduced in this period have begun to have their first effects and determine how the authorities of the Russian Federation react<sup>28</sup>.

The next, fourth sanctions package was adopted on 15 March 2022<sup>29</sup>. These were economic and personal sanctions. They concerned the prohibition of all transactions with certain designated state-owned enterprises and the prohibition to provide credit rating services to any person or entity in Russia, as well as access to subscription services in connection with credit rating activities. A ban on new investments in the Russian energy sector was also adopted, and a comprehensive export restriction on equipment, technology and services for the needs of the energy industry was introduced. This was intended to hit the most sensitive and profitable part of the Russian economy, although it did not yet concern the trade in energy resources itself. It was also decided to introduce further restrictions on trade in iron, steel and luxury goods<sup>30</sup>. Further personal sanctions were also introduced. Individual

<sup>27</sup> Russia's military aggression against Ukraine: EU bans certain Russian banks from SWIFT system and introduces further restrictions. – Council of the European Union. Press release, 2 March 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2022/03/02/russia-s-military-aggression-against-ukraine-eu-bans-certain-russian-banks-from-swift-system-and-introduces-further-restrictions/> (accessed 02.08.2022).

<sup>28</sup> **Wiśniewska, I.** 2022. Kolejna fala sankcji. Nerwowość w Rosji. – Analizy Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 01.03.2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-03-01/kolejna-fala-sankcji-nerwowosc-w-rosji> (accessed 26.08.2022).

<sup>29</sup> Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/427 of 15 March 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Regulation (EU) 2022/428 of 15 March 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/429 of 15 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/430 of 15 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. – Official Journal of the European Union L 87 I, Vol. 65, 15 March 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Russia's military aggression against Ukraine: fourth EU package of sectoral and individual measures. – Council of the EU. Press release, Brussels, 15 March 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2022/03/15/russia-s-military-aggression-against-ukraine-fourth-eu-package-of-sectoral-and-individual-measures/> (accessed 01.09.2022).

sanctions covered 15 persons (including, among others, R. Abramovich) and new restrictions on economic entities operating in the sectors of aviation, military and dual-use products, shipbuilding and machinery<sup>31</sup>.

By December 2022 the European Union had already introduced the 9<sup>th</sup> package of sanctions against Russia. According to data from January 2023, EU sanctions covered 1,386 persons and 171 entities. In addition to personal sanctions, the restrictions covered most economic sectors: energy, transport, financial and business services, dual-use and high-tech products, international trade, the exclusion of Russia from public procurement and the use of European money, and restrictions on disinformation entities. The effects of the restrictions applied include the imposition of sanctions on 70% of the Russian banking system, restrictions on approximately 90% of oil imports from Russia, serious problems for the Russian aviation sector, preventing public financing or providing financial assistance for trade with Russia and investment support for it, in particular including domestic export support, significantly lowering Russia's technological capacity, terminating the participation of Russian public authorities or affiliates in all existing grant agreements, and suspending all related payments under Horizon 2020, Euratom and Erasmus+ programs.

The sanctions imposed by the EU and other Western countries on the Russian Federation and Belarus in connection with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine were a continuation of the reaction from 2014. However, their scope and impact are definitely stronger. They are not the only form of support for the attacked state. Ukraine also receives economic and humanitarian aid as well as strong political support. Sanctions are therefore part of a broader approach that combines short-term and long-term instruments. As F. Giumelli notes, sanctions are implemented under three sanction regimes: coercion, limitation and signalling<sup>32</sup>. The sanctions are a clear message of the EU's position on Russian aggression. They signal the desired political goals and the degree of determination of member states. The restrictions that were introduced concern the area of finance (restrictions on access to financial

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<sup>31</sup> Fourth package of sanctions in view of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine: 15 additional individuals and 9 entities subject to EU restrictive measures. – Council of the EU. Press release, Brussels. 15 March 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2022/03/15/russia-s-military-aggression-against-ukraine-fourth-eu-package-of-sectoral-and-individual-measures/> (accessed 01.09.2022).

<sup>32</sup> Giumelli, F. 2015. Sanctioning Russia: the right questions. – ISSUE Alert, 10/2015. European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2015.

instruments, financial and insurance services and others), international trade and access to certain technologies. The coercive function is performed by personal sanctions, such as a ban on entry and the freezing of financial assets in EU countries.

The sanctions against the Russian Federation follow two logics of action at the same time. Traditionally, with sanctions, pressure is exerted on a state's economy and its financial system. This is intended to undermine the ability of the Russian Federation to finance aggression in Ukraine. An equally important direction of action is selective, precise action aimed at representatives of the power elite. This aims to destroy the unity of the economic and political elite in the Russian Federation and provoke the process of creating a potential alternative to the centre of power. However, the effectiveness of these activities is limited and requires a longer period of time<sup>33</sup>.

Sanctions and political pressure are not a decisive factor in the current conflict. However, they seem to be a significant impediment for Russia, increasing the costs of its policy and hindering military operations (including through technological sanctions). It also probably generates high costs in the long-term for the Russian economy. At present, the duration of restrictions will play a decisive role, depending primarily on the attitude of the Russian authorities, but also on the determination and cohesion of EU Member States. Taking into account the decision-making mechanism at the EU level, which requires unanimity, it should be pointed out that this is a potentially weak point of European policy that is susceptible to Russian influence. It is also important to firmly enforce compliance with the restrictions and tighten them at the EU level as well as in the Member States.

### 3. European public opinion on the war in Ukraine

One of the important factors determining political support of the authorities of a member state for the actions of the EU or NATO in the face of the war in Ukraine is the degree of public support for the policy pursued. It is a fragile element of any democratic system susceptible to, among others, disinformation activities. Russia is aware of this weakness and has been increasing pressure on EU governments and societies since the beginning of

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<sup>33</sup> **Portela, C.; Kluge, J.** 2022. Slow-acting tools. Evaluating EU sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. – Brief 11, Nov 22. European Union Institute for Security Studies, November 2022.

its invasion of Ukraine. Activities in the information sphere and economic pressure are aimed at weakening the West's resilience and changing its policy.

Actions taken by the EU under the Common Foreign and Security Policy require the unanimity of the Member States. The authorities of these countries must take into account the degree of public support in their actions. Thus, public opinion becomes one of the important factors indirectly determining the EU's policy towards the war in Ukraine. According to surveys conducted between 12 October and 7 November 2022 as part of the Eurobarometer,<sup>34</sup> three-quarters of the inhabitants of the Member States support the EU's policy towards the war in Ukraine (strongly approve – 33%, somewhat approve – 41%). However, almost every fourth respondent does not accept such a policy (strongly disapproved – 7%, somewhat disapproved – 16%). The highest total approval rates can be found in Sweden (97%), Finland (95%), the Netherlands (93%), Denmark (92%) and Portugal (92%). The weakest supporters of the pro-Ukrainian EU policy were among those surveyed in Bulgaria (48%), Greece (48%) and Slovakia (49%). It is worth noting that in Greece (51% total disapproval) and Slovakia (49% total disapproval) the number of people opposing EU policy towards the conflict in Ukraine is slightly higher than those supporting the actions taken. In Cyprus there are exactly the same number of supporters and opponents of this EU policy (48%). In the countries in the immediate vicinity of the conflict (except for Slovakia and Bulgaria), people strongly support EU policy in this area: Lithuania (87% total approval), Poland (85% total approval), Latvia (80% total approval), Estonia (76 % total approval), with Romania showing a slightly lower approval rating (60% total approval).

Actions taken by the EU and its Member States include sanctions against Russia and Belarus and financial, humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine. Proper cooperation between Member States is important for the implementation of the planned activities. More than half of inhabitants surveyed in the Member States are satisfied with cooperation within the EU in connection with the war in Ukraine (very satisfied – 9%, fairly satisfied – 49%). However, every third respondent was of the opposite opinion (not at all satisfied – 9%, not very satisfied – 28%). Assessments in this regard vary significantly across Member States. Most positive responses (over 80%) were recorded in Ireland, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden and Finland. Negative opinions regarding cooperation of the Member States in the analysed case prevail (to a small

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<sup>34</sup> Eurobarometer. Parlemeter. EB 98.1, Autumn 2022; Eurobarometer. Data Annex. EB 98.1, Autumn 2022.

extent) in Greece (61% total not satisfied), Cyprus (56% total not satisfied), Slovakia (54% total not satisfied) and Bulgaria (50 % total not satisfied). In countries lying directly on the border with Ukraine, Russia or Belarus, people who are satisfied with the degree of cooperation within the EU in the current situation prevail. Positive opinions (total satisfied) prevail in Poland (72%), Lithuania (57%), Romania (57%), Latvia (53%) and Estonia (49%). The reasons for the differentiated assessments between EU policy and the cooperation of the Member States are different and may be related not only to the external situation (Russian aggression), but also to internal conditions (the political and economic situation in a Member State). The general assessment of the integration project by society may also be important.

It is worth noting that in the same surveys 74% of EU citizens surveyed indicated that they were concerned about the risk of a nuclear incident, 93% worried about the rising costs of living, including rising energy and food costs, and 81% worried that the conflict in Ukraine might spread to other countries. These European “worries” indicate at the same time the areas of the possible influence of communication (propaganda) activities on the part of the Russian Federation. In the opinion of many Europeans, the decisive factor seems to be how the EU and Member States will cope with rising costs, both at the macro level and in the everyday lives of EU residents<sup>35</sup>.

In the case of Poland, support for Ukraine has been at a very high level from the very beginning of this phase of the conflict. In a CBOS survey conducted several days after Russia’s attack on Ukraine, over 90% of the surveyed Poles believed that the international community should support Ukraine. The said the aid should cover financial support (93% of support), diplomatic pressure on Russia (91% of support), the total isolation of Russia in the political and economic sphere (91% of support), and supplying Ukraine with military equipment and weapons (90% of support)<sup>36</sup>. In those first weeks of the war at the borders of the country with the influx of traumatized refugees, Poles, guided by emotion, definitely took the side of attacked Ukraine.

In relation to the Eurobarometer surveys analysed above, it is also worth looking at how Poles answered questions about the further course of the conflict. According to CBOS research, most Poles believed that the war would not spread to other countries. What is more, this opinion prevailed in the successively conducted studies from April to December 2022 (except for May 2022).

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<sup>35</sup> Key Challenges of our Times – Autumn 2022. Summary. European Commission 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Polacy wobec rosyjskiej inwazji na Ukrainę. Research report CBOS, No. 38/2022, p. 7.

The largest number of people indicating this opinion was in September 2022. In the last survey in December 2022, such a belief was expressed by 43%<sup>37</sup>. It is also worth noting that the majority of Poles are convinced that no concessions should be made in favour of Russia and that Ukraine should be supported in continuing the fight. Such opinions were expressed by 59% of respondents in April 2022, rising to 64% of respondents in November 2022<sup>38</sup>.

Analysing the above-mentioned data, it should be stated that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has had a significant impact on the opinions of Europeans. The vast majority of respondents unequivocally took the side of the attacked state and positively assessed the EU's actions towards this conflict. These activities include not only diplomacy, but also subsequent sanctions packages as well as financial, military and humanitarian assistance from the EU and its member states for Ukraine and Ukrainians. At the same time, research shows concern from EU citizens about security issues, as well as the possible social and economic costs.

However, Eurobarometer surveys also indicate member states where support for the pro-Ukrainian policy of the European Union is lower. In each of these countries this may result both from the assessment of the impact of the war on the standard of living and the sense of security of citizens, as well as from various internal conditions. However, particular attention should be paid to the dynamics of changes in social attitudes in these countries. With the intensified disinformation influence of the Russian Federation, a situation favourable to social unrest may arise there and influence political processes. It is therefore important for the EU and member states to formulate an appropriate information policy and to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

#### 4. Summary

As noted by Ł. Donaj, Russia considers Ukraine to be an area of rivalry with the West (especially with the USA) and an instrument in the global political game. In this perspective, control of Ukraine also strengthens Russia's dominance in the post-Soviet sphere, and a loss of influence is perceived as a strategic threat. From the Russian point of view, the social and economic changes

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<sup>37</sup> Polacy o wojnie w Ukrainie i zaangażowaniu NATO. Research report CBOS, No. 162/2022, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Polacy o wojnie na Ukrainie i pomocy dla uchodźców. Research report CBOS, Nr 152/2022, p. 3.

that have been slowly taking place in Ukraine are also significant<sup>39</sup>. According to some experts, they may be perceived as a threat to the Russian vision of the state and economy. The fear of the “contagiousness” of potential Ukrainian modernisation in the liberal style could therefore be one of the factors influencing the perception of this process in Moscow.

There will still be time for a final answer about the reasons that led to the escalation of the conflict by Russia on 24 February 2023. The course of events and analysis of the situation made in the future in retrospect will show the value of neo-realistic<sup>40</sup> or liberal concepts<sup>41</sup>. However, in the current situation, questions about the future are more important. Is it possible to return economic and political relations to the state that existed before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine? What impact will this war have on Ukraine, Russia, the United States, the European Union and its member states? Will a new regional order emerge from it?

Much depends on the West’s continued determination to help Ukraine and its resistance to the rising costs of its policy. It seems that the experience of the first year of this conflict has shown that the European Union, despite the visible differences at the political level, acts more efficiently, faster and more decisively than before. However, the effectiveness of the actions taken, especially economic sanctions, requires two factors: time and determination at the level of each Member State to firmly enforce their observance. However, as noted by T. Keatinge, there is much to be done in this respect<sup>42</sup>. Russian aggression against Ukraine has become an important factor of change in the European Union. It had an impact not only on current activities, but also on discussions about the future of European integration. One such effect is discussion on the future of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (e.g. the issue of decision-making) or the EU’s Common Security and Defence

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<sup>39</sup> **Donaj, Ł.** 2022. *Polityka bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy po 2014 roku*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa UAM.

<sup>40</sup> **Mearsheimer, J. J.** 2014. *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*. – *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault> (accessed 24.01.2023).

<sup>41</sup> **Ikenberry, G. J.** 2017. *The Plot Against American Foreign Policy Can the Liberal Order Survive?* – *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-04-17/plot-against-american-foreign-policy> (accessed 24.01.2023).

<sup>42</sup> **Keatinge, T.** 2023. *Failure to expand the allied sanctions coalition must be addressed*. – *Politico*, 17 January 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/failure-expand-sanction-coalition-addressed-eu-russia-ukraine-war/> (accessed 01.02.2023).



Policy. This is another crisis in recent years that the EU has to face and which is also a catalyst for change.

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